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PAGANISM TO CHRISTIANITY IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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IN Anglo-Saxon as in Christian history, many roads lead to Rome. This has been correctly and at times overemphasized in matters ranging from Augustine to Whitby, from numismatics to law, from banners to Bede. Indeed the Roman road has been so broad and so well marked with recorded *miliaria* that we may have missed the growth-ridden Germanic by-paths which were actually trod by the tribes in England. But surely the impact of culture on cult is as important in history as the reverse, and the terms in which the newly converted Anglo-Saxons interpreted the Christian religion were shaped by the tribal culture, impregnated, as it was, by the heathenism of the old religion. Gregory the Great's famous letter to the Abbot Mellitus,¹ advising that pagan temples in England be used for the worship of the Christian God that the people "ad loca quae consuevit, familiarius concurrat," and that the sacrificial animals of heathenism be now devoted to Christian festivals, agrees with the *responsa* of the same pope to Augustine concerning the choosing of local customs best suited to the conditions of the converted.² In a way, this study is a scandalous footnote to that wise anthropological advice, with the intention of setting forth some of the similarities of the old and new religion which allowed a syncretic merging. Thus many features of the Conversion period which have been interpreted *post eventum* as Christian were undoubtedly seen with other — and familiar — overtones by the Woden-sprung rulers and their people.

In the first place, although the Conversion of England transpired

¹ Ven. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 30.

² *Ibid.*, I, 27; on the genuineness of the *responsa*, cf. Wilhelm Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford, 1946), p. 17, n. 1; W. J. Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims to Rome and the Schola Saxonum* (Fribourg, Switzerland, 1937), p. 9, n. 3. M. Deanesly and P. Grosjean, "The Canterbury Edition of the Answers of Pope Gregory I to St. Augustine," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, X (1959), pp. 1-49, have recently examined the arguments against the authenticity and have concluded that, within limited distinctions not touching the *responsa* cited above, "the *libellus* may be held to be Gregorian."

with little violence and few dramatic stands by organized heathenism, the opposition of tradition and embedded culture can be seen as the chief bulwarks against the triumph of the Cross. It is not merely that the new theology was translated into terms of northern life, with "the Chief of princes, the Ruler of all peoples" giving *mund* to his *fyrð* from his high-seat in the wine-hall of Heaven,³ as Christ on earth had summoned his thanes to him.⁴ This often startling imagery has frequently been commented upon, and I have no desire to do so again.

But heathenism itself continued. In Kent King Eadbald, son of the converted Aethelberht, returned to the older faith, leading his people *ad priorem vomitum*.⁵ There is no evidence that it was outlawed in Kent until A.D. 640, when King Eorcenberht, Aethelberht's grandson, "was the first of the kings of the English who ordered by his supreme authority that the idols in his whole realm be abandoned and destroyed."⁶ In the last surviving Kentish law code, dating from the very end of the century, it is still necessary for King Wihtred to forbid both freemen and slaves from making offerings to devils.⁷ In the realm of the East Saxons, the three sons of King Sabert, all of whom had remained pagan, "gave free licence to the people subject to them to worship idols" after their father's death, and, Bede tells us, the people could not be recalled to faith in Christ even after Sabert's sons had been killed in battle against the West Saxons.⁸ The apostasy of Redwald of East Anglia, the fourth of Bede's *bretwaldas*, is perhaps too well known to cite, with his attempt to serve both Christ and the old gods.⁹ In

³ See, e.g., Christ, 514; Christ and Satan, 93, 219, 309; The Lord's Prayer II, 47-48. Line references to Anglo-Saxon poems throughout this paper are, unless otherwise stated, from The Anglo-Saxon Records (ed. Krapp and Dobbie; New York, 1931-1953). Cf. Jean I. Young, "Glaed waes ic gliwum — Ungloomy Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Poetry," The Early Cultures of North-West Europe (H. M. Chadwick Memorial Studies, ed. by Sir Cyril Fox and Bruce Dickins; Cambridge, 1950), p. 276.

⁴ "The mighty Lord, / The Prince of splendour, summoned His thanes, / The well-loved band, to Bethany": Christ, transl. in C. W. Kennedy, Early English Christian Poetry (New York, 1952), p. 98. Christ, 456-458.

⁵ Bede, Hist. Eccl., II, 5.

⁶ Ibid., III, 8.

⁷ Wihtred c. 12, 13: F. L. Attenborough, The Laws of the Earliest English Kings (Cambridge, 1922), p. 26; cf. p. 3 for dating of code.

⁸ Bede, Hist. Eccl., II, 5.

⁹ Ibid., II, 15.

Wessex, the earliest law code, that of King Ine, a contemporary of Wihtred of Kent, does not legislate against heathenism, but, as Miss Whitelock has recently reminded us,¹⁰ this proves nothing about the latter's survival, since we have these laws only in Alfred's edition of them. Mercia, of course, remained staunchly heathen at least until Penda's death in 654.¹¹

Even before the reintroduction of paganism by the Viking invasions, the synod of Clovesho in 747 and the legatine report to Pope Hadrian in 786 give evidence of the strength of a continuing paganism.¹² The numerous references to heathen practices in Anglo-Saxon laws after the invasions — under Alfred, Edward the Elder, Athelstan, Edmund, Aethelred the Redeless, and Cnut — as well as in canonical collections¹³ stem undoubtedly largely from their reintroduction in an age when, as Pope Formosus wrote to the bishops of the English in the 890s, "the abominable rites of the pagans have sprouted again in your parts."¹⁴ However much the merging of the two strands complicates the problem of survival,¹⁵ the latter is well attested — perhaps especially in the Anglo-Saxon charms¹⁶ — and the resulting syncretism at times makes for a virtual neo-polytheism. "Woden wrought idols; the Lord wrought the spacious skies," says a gnomic poem.¹⁷ That the culture of the tribes and the old religion which helped form it in their turn shaped Christianity, which was assimilated to them, is in its principle surprising to no historian of the Conversion

¹⁰ Dorothy Whitelock, ed., *English Historical Documents c. 500–1042* (London, 1955), p. 331. This volume has been used for many sources in this paper because of its convenience to most readers.

¹¹ This is true even though one may hesitate to accept T. C. Lethbridge's explanation that this was probably the kingdom in which "the race of Angles remained relatively free from a large admixture of British blood"; T. C. Lethbridge, *Merlin's Island* (London, 1948), p. 129.

¹² Whitelock, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 772.

¹³ References are collected in F. Grendon, "The Anglo-Saxon Charms," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, XXII (1909), pp. 140–142.

¹⁴ Whitelock, *op. cit.*, p. 820.

¹⁵ In Wulfstan's "Sermon to the English," probably preached in 1014, for example, in discussing the presence of "wizards and sorceresses" in England, he uses the word "valkyries" for the latter but apparently not in the customary Scandinavian sense of the term; *ibid.*, p. 859 and n. 1.

¹⁶ F. Grendon, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, 134; G. Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (The Hague, 1948), esp. pp. 27–48, 114–115, and, for the Christianization of the charms, 115–117. Cf. the recorded forfeiture of an estate in the late tenth century because of the practice of witchcraft: Whitelock, *op. cit.*, p. 519.

¹⁷ *Maxims II*, 132–133.

period. As a result, the societal emphases in Anglo-Saxon Christianity may themselves be a test of the vexed problem of Anglo-Saxon paganism's similarities to the religion of early Scandinavia, that "womb of nations," as Jordanes calls it. As a matter of fact, the Sutton Hoo finds have revealed hitherto unsuspected connections between at least the East Anglian royal house and the Uppland district of Sweden.¹⁸

Although no Anglo-Saxon work gives us full information on pre-Christian religion in England, almost no poem from before the Norman Conquest, no matter how Christian its theme, is not steeped in it,¹⁹ and the evidences for pagan survivals and their integration into the new faith go beyond even the literary sources. Thus, as Lethbridge reminds us, "to say, 'this is a monument erected in Christian times and therefore the symbolism on it must be Christian,' is an unrealistic approach. The rites of the older faith, now regarded as superstition, are practised all over the country today. It did not mean that people were not Christian; but that they could see a lot of sense in the old beliefs also."²⁰ The rites of pre-Saxon gods in England, such as Helith at Cerne Abbas and Gourmaillon at Wandlebury, survived the coming of both the Anglo-Saxons and Christianity,²¹ and the Germanic precursors of the Christian God seem to have been no less vigorous. We shall examine this continuity from paganism to Christianity primarily in two areas, theology and kingship, in relation to the heavenly and earthly leaders of the *folc*.

The importance of Woden for both is proverbial. The genealogies of the royal houses of Kent, Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia, Bernicia, Deira, and Lindsey all record the descent of their kings from Woden. The kings of Essex trace their lineage from Seax-

¹⁸ F. P. Magoun, Jr., "Beowulf and King Hygelac in the Netherlands," *English Studies*, XXXV (1954), pp. 203-204; for an extensive bibliography of Swedish-East Anglian connections, cf. Prof. Magoun's review of D. Whitelock's *The Beginnings of English Society* in *Speculum*, XXVIII (1953), p. 220.

¹⁹ Cf., e.g., Friedrich Brincker, *Germanische Altertümer in dem angelsächsischen Gedichte "Judith"* (Hamburg, 1898), p. 5, where this point is insisted upon, and *passim*.

²⁰ Lethbridge, *Gogmagog. The Buried Gods* (London, 1957), p. 136.

²¹ *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 23, 81-82, 159 (in which the imaginative author tells of a May 1st night spent looking in vain for still surviving rites at the head of the fertile Cerne Giant); cf. also Lethbridge, "The Anglo-Saxon Settlement in Eastern England. A Reassessment," *Dark Age Britain. Studies Presented to E. T. Leeds* (D. B. Harden, ed.; London, 1956), p. 119.

neat, a god known among the Saxons of the Continent, identified both as a son of Woden and as the god Tiw (Tyr); only the Sussex royal genealogy is not known but there is little reason to believe that it too was not Woden-sprung.²² Divine descent was a claim of Northern royalty, including that of the Angli, before the settlement of England,²³ and its continuation along with that of the Woden-cult is to be expected among a people which continued to identify itself by its ancestry. The importance of such divine descent for Germanic kings is testified to not only by the persistence with which it was clung to even after their conversion but by the results of its loss; "scarce one of the ancient royal kindreds survives," Alcuin writes, "and by as much as their lineage is uncertain, by so much is their power enfeebled."²⁴ The name of Woden continued in England in the "Nine Herbs Charm" and in place-names such as Wansdyke (Woden's Dyke), but of more importance to us is the assimilation of his cult to the new religion, since the culture of Woden-sprung kings and Woden-worship did not allow the name or cult to perish. Indeed, even his animals — the wolf and the raven — apparently continue in a sacral manner.²⁵

As might be expected, he was, in the first place, equated with the Christian Devil. Wansdyke, the great pre-Saxon earthwork, for example, was also known after the introduction of Christianity as the Devil's Ditch, and local tradition maintained in time that it was built by the Devil on a Wednesday — which is, of course, Woden's day.²⁶ The burial-mound on the Wiltshire downs known

²² Whitelock, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13, with collected references on p. 12, n. 11; for recent and useful discussions, cf. Gordon Copley, *The Conquest of Wessex in the Sixth Century* (London, 1954), pp. 38-39, 40 (references in Bede), 134 (Woden in the West Saxon king-lists); E. Philippson, *Die Genealogie der Götter in Germanischer Religion, Mythologie, und Theologie* (Urbana, Ill., 1953), pp. 34 (Seax-neat), 88, n. 152 (bibliography); K. Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XXXIX (1953), pp. 288, 293, 309-314, 323.

²³ H. Munro Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation* (Cambridge, 1924), pp. 300-303.

²⁴ Letter to Eanbald of York; cf. Bishop Daniel's letter to Boniface, 719-722 A.D. J. E. A. Jolliffe, *The Constitutional History of Medieval England* (New York, 1947), p. 44.

²⁵ Brincker, *op. cit.*, p. 6; Ladislaus Mittner, *Wurd. Das Sakrale in der Altgermanischen Epik* (Bern, 1955), p. 59.

²⁶ L. V. Grinsell, *The Ancient Burial-Mounds of England* (2nd ed.; London, 1953), pp. 72, 79. For other place-names containing forms of Woden's name, cf. Bruce Dickinson, "English Names and Old English Heathenism," *Essays and Studies*, XIX (1934), pp. 154-155.

in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle²⁷ as Woden's Barrow became in time called Adam's Grave, although whether this Christianization took place in our period or later is now impossible to say. Certainly many pre-Christian barrows became associated with the Devil, showing a conversion of these sites from the gods of paganism. Post-Conquest though some of these may be, others date from Saxon times, as the *Scuccan hlaew* (the Devil's barrow) of Anglo-Saxon land-charters.²⁸ As the gods — Woden or others — were metamorphosed into giants, barrows were named for them, evidence for which dates from Saxon times,²⁹ but their association with Woden is at the most tenuous.

Much more significant is the equating of Woden with Christ. In the much discussed Anglo-Saxon "Nine Herbs Charm" the Christian emendator of an originally pagan charm against poison has added that the nine herbs, whose virtues are extolled in the charm, were invented by Christ while He hung on the Cross. "They were created by the wise Lord, holy in heaven as He hung (on the cross); He set and sent them to the seven worlds, to the wretched and the fortunate, as a help to all." Then the older god appears: "These nine have power against nine poisons. A worm came crawling, it killed nothing. For Woden took nine glory-twigs, he smote then the adder that it flew apart into nine parts."³⁰ Othinn, the Norse Woden, had gained knowledge of runes by sacrificing himself to himself, hanging and fasting on the World-tree, according to the Icelandic poem Havamal;³¹ here, as Woden-Othinn masters the magic runes of wisdom by hanging on his Cosmic Tree, so Christ creates the magic herbs as He hung on His Tree, the Cross. Many relationships are focused here: Woden and Christ as the Hanging God; Yggdrasill the World-tree and the

²⁷ *Sub annis* 592 and 715. In the new edition by G. N. Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Everyman's Library; London, 1953), the "Christianized" form of Adam's Grave is, unfortunately, used; it is not in the Anglo-Saxon text.

²⁸ Grinsell, *op. cit.*, p. 79, with examples of long and round barrows associated by tradition with the Devil.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 78; the twelfth century "translation" of skeletons from barrows to monasteries and into saints' relics is well recorded: *ibid.*, pp. 80, 110.

³⁰ Storms, *op. cit.*, p. 189, with Anglo-Saxon text on p. 188 and discussion of these lines on p. 195. For the parallel of Woden and the Latin Mercurius, who also created letters, cf. B. Dickens, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

³¹ *Havamal* 138 f.; cf. Storms, *op. cit.*, p. 195; A. G. van Hamel, "Othinn Hanging On the Tree," *Acta Philologica Scandinavica*, VII (1932), pp. 261-262.

redeeming Cross; the sacrifice of Woden to himself, as the priest that offers and the victim that is offered, with the Sacrifice of Christ, the victim and the priest; the Germanic casting of lots with twigs marked by runes, reported by Tacitus (*Germania*, c. 10), and the casting of lots associated with the Crucifixion; the creative act in suffering and death displayed in Woden's mastery of the runes of knowledge and Christ's creation of the herbs. Although the problem of Christian influence on the *Havamal* is undoubtedly insoluble, the existence of Woden's association with runes in a partially Christianized charm still known among the Christian Anglo-Saxons will perhaps lead us to van Hamel's conclusion that "if a certain similarity should exist between the popular traditions of early christianity and pagan mythology, would it not be more natural to accept a fundamental affinity than a borrowing? . . . The christian God never supplanted the pagan deities. He only proved the stronger one. This is an evolution that leaves no room for the doctrine that a myth of Othinn should have been influenced by a christian legend."³² There is at least good reason to believe that the traditions are independent; if so, this would lead a culture saturated with Woden-worship to take up with ease the cult of the new Hanging God when the old one — literally "the old one," *thone ealdan deofol, se ealda sceocca*, as Aelfric calls the Devil³³ — proves less potent.

Furthermore, the genealogies of the Woden-sprung kings have been assimilated to Christianity. In the familiar mythical lineage of King Aethelwulf of Wessex in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle *sub anno* 855, Woden is sixteenth in descent from "Sceaf, who is the son of Noah and was born in Noah's Ark."³⁴ Appropriate as it is to have generated in the Ark one who in traditions recorded by Aethelward and William of Malmesbury had drifted as a child in a boat to his future kingdom,³⁵ this "arcane" transition makes the West Saxon rulers collateral relatives, as Professor Magoun

³² Ibid., p. 262.

³³ Neliu O. Halvorson, *Doctrinal Terms in Aelfric's Homilies* (Iowa City, Iowa, 1932), p. 29.

³⁴ Thus in MSS. B and C; the Parker Chronicle omits three generations and has Hrathra born in the Ark; cf. Sisam, *op. cit.*, p. 315, on Bedwig as the ancestor in the Ark.

³⁵ Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-267, in which the Scyld-Sceaf traditions are analyzed, and 272-276.

has pointed out, with our Lord.³⁶ If I may be permitted an *excursus* into wild Wales, this has its parallel in the court-pedigree of Hywel the Good, who traced his descent from "Amalech, who was the son of Beli the Great and his mother Anna, whom they say to be the sister of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ";³⁷ since Anna is probably Ana or Anu, a variant of Danu, the Earth Mother, and Beli Mawr may be, but less likely, the god Belenus, our Lord would be the nephew of the Mother of the gods, and the assimilation of a royal genealogy to the new religion would indeed be analogous to the Anglo-Saxon transition.

The absorption of the other gods into Christianity can be treated more summarily. In the case of Thunor or Thor the Thunderer, we may well ask if an Anglo-Saxon warrior would react as we do to a land-grant of King Edward the Elder in A.D. 901 which opens, "In the name of the High Thunderer, Creator of the world," or a generation earlier (A.D. 872) to the phrase, "by the abundant grace of God and the gratuitous gift of him who thunders and rules."³⁸ As late as William of Malmesbury, Athelstan the Glorious is described as being "like a thunderbolt to rebels."³⁹ These, I believe, would be seen by northerners less in terms of *Jupiter Tonans* or of the "sons of thunder" of Mark's gospel and more in terms of northern religion. One of the panels of the Gosforth Cross in Cumberland has recently been interpreted as Thor's fight with the Midgard Serpent, a theme probably reintroduced during the later Norse settlement, as have three fragments of crosses in Durham Cathedral as his battle with Mökkurkalfi ("Cloud Calf").⁴⁰ Neither of these identifications can be accepted with

³⁶ F. P. Magoun, Jr., "King Aethelwulf's Biblical Ancestors," *Modern Language Review*, XLVI (1951), pp. 249-250. Luke iii, 36-38 is the suggested source for the Biblical names.

³⁷ A. W. Wade-Evans, Nennius's "History of the Britons" (London, 1938), p. 102; N. Chadwick, ed., *Studies in Early British History* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 132, 196.

³⁸ Whitelock, *op. cit.*, pp. 499, 490; cf. p. 522, a grant of 977: "inspired with speech of the Thunderer." For non-Anglo-Saxon parallels of God as "the Thunderer," cf. *Hibernicus exul*, MGH., *Poet.*, I, p. 395, v. 10 ff., and Godeschalk, *ibid.*, p. 94, no. 7 (in which the appellation refers to Christ); H. Fichtenau, *The Carolingian Empire* (transl., P. Munz; Oxford, 1957), pp. 47-48.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

⁴⁰ Brian Branston, *The Lost Gods of England* (London, 1957), pp. 116-117, 120-121. However, cf. Christabel F. Fiske, "Old English Modification of Teutonic Racial Conceptions," *Studies in Language and Literature in Celebration of the 70th*

certainty, however; he is, incidentally, never mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon charms,⁴¹ but he appears perhaps more often than any other pagan deity in place-names in England.⁴²

Perhaps the most puzzling parallelisms, with virtually insoluble problems, are those between the Devil and characters of northern paganism, especially Loki, to whom I shall confine myself. This, as R. E. Woolf has suggested, is partly because the Devil, like Loki, is the archetype of "motiveless malignity," partly because as the Devil is the evil-bringer, so Loki brings evil to the gods, and partly because, in more general terms, Satan as the "faithless retainer" and "eternal exile" would be understandable to Anglo-Saxon society.⁴³ But the analogy goes beyond this. The bound Satan of the Caedmon manuscripts has more relationship with the bound Loki and bound gods of the pagan North than with any Biblical source, in spite of the reference in Revelation (20, 2) to the bound Satan; Loki and the otter have been suggested as an interpretation of the Ramsey carving and, even more significantly, as the bound figure on the Gosforth Cross, both of the Viking Age.⁴⁴

Two mutilated carved stones from Leeds also show a bound figure who has been suggested as Weland the Smith because of the presence of what seem to be smith's tools at its feet, although it does not fit the known versions of the Weland story. I should suggest the bound Loki, with the smith's tools as the symbols of

Birthday of James Morgan Hart (New York, 1910), pp. 282-285, on identification of Thor with the Devil. Also, Peter Paulsen, *Axt und Kreuz bei den Nordgermanen* (Berlin, 1939), pp. 187-233, on relation of St. Olaf cult and Thor cult in the North.

⁴¹ Storms, op. cit., p. 148.

⁴² Branston, op. cit., p. 105; Dickinson, op. cit., pp. 155-156. For the identification of eleven of his shrines in southern and eastern England, cf. Sir Frank Stenton, "The Historical Bearing of Place-Name Studies," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, XXIII (1940), pp. 1-24 and map.

⁴³ R. E. Woolf, "The Devil in Old English Poetry," *Review of English Studies*, IV, N.S. (1953), pp. 2-4, 6.

⁴⁴ H. R. Ellis Davidson, "Gods and Heroes in Stone," *The Early Cultures . . .*, pp. 132-133; this important article, pp. 123-139, has been used as the basis for the following, even though the relationships of Christian Devil, Loki, and smith have not been fully developed in it. For the Gosforth Cross, cf. Knut Berg, "The Gosforth Cross," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXI (1958), pp. 27-43, in which the Cross panels are interpreted as scenes of Ragnarok, the twilight of the pagan gods, on three sides and the Christian rebirth and victory of the Cross on the east side; the bottom scene on the west side is interpreted as the bound Loki (p. 35).

that god; Loki, after all, is paraphrased by the later Snorri Sturluson as "Forger of Evil" and "the Bound God,"⁴⁵ and the Anglo-Saxon Guthlac describes the devils as "smiths of woe."⁴⁶ This would help to explain the puzzling presence of smith's tools on the Halton Cross from Lancashire, which, even though here probably connected either with the Sigurd or the Weland story, would have further meaning because of its presence on a Christian cross, since smith's tools are found elsewhere on scenes of the Crucifixion. These have been suggested as symbols of the tortures of Christ,⁴⁷ but I believe they are more readily explained as the triumph of Christ over the "Forger of Evil," Loki, the fettered god, and, by projection, over the bound Satan.⁴⁸ The relations of these figures to the animal-headed or bird-headed figures on the Kirklevington Cross and similar figures at the foot of a Lancaster Cross, in place of the soldiers, with its probable relationship to a group on the Franks Casket and the figure between two beasts on the purse-mount from Sutton Hoo, serve to complicate the picture with possibilities of pre-Christian ritual,⁴⁹ but the possible translation of Satan and lesser devils of Christianity into these terms remains too strong to ignore. It may simply be noted here that a devil as human form with animal characteristics — familiar to us in his horns and tail — was known to Germanic peoples before the coming of Christianity and continues in part — for example, in Aelfric's homiletic descriptions of the Devil.⁵⁰

May I now simply list other characteristics of Anglo-Saxon paganism which were so much a part of the tribal culture and outlook that the transition to Christianity was facilitated, even though they translated the new religion into sometimes wondrous forms? The Dream of the Rood, for example, important sections of which are carved on the pre-Viking Age Ruthwell Cross (c. A.D. 700) draws almost undoubtedly in its non-Biblical portrayal of the Crucifixion upon the death of the god Baldur; here "the

⁴⁵ Skaldskaparmál, c. 16; A. G. Brodeur, transl., *The Prose Edda by Snorri Sturluson* (New York, 1916), pp. 114–115.

⁴⁶ Guthlac, 205; cf. Jean I. Young, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

⁴⁷ Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁴⁸ For the later Norse similarities between Loki and Satan, cf. E. A. Philippon, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 48, 56, 71, 73.

⁴⁹ Davidson, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–129, 136–138, where these works are discussed.

⁵⁰ Halvorson, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

young hero" mounts "the marvellous tree" and is wounded by darts: "the warriors left me standing laced with blood; I was wounded unto death with darts" — certainly an exaggeration of the spear at the Crucifixion but as Baldur was in the pagan myth, when the sport of throwing darts at him turned into the cosmic tragedy of the "bleeding god."⁵¹ Furthermore, the same poem may relate not only Baldur to Christ but Frey as well to the Christian Lord. "Frey," which has become identified with "Lord," is used for "*the* Lord": "geseah ic tha Frean mancynnes . . ." ("I saw there the Frey of mankind"); this is found in a more general sense in Beowulf, where "frea" is used seventeen times for "lord,"⁵² even though the goddess Freyja and her maidens nowhere appear to be "converted" into the Virgin Mary and three (or nine) Marys, as they are in the Scandinavian North.⁵³ The possibility of an early pagan trinity of gods in the North, based on the later evidence of Odin, Tyr, and Thor as a trinity, Odin, Thor, and Frey in Uppsala, and other trinities of Odin, Hönir, and Lodur (Loki), Odin, Wili, and We, and Har, Jafnhar, and Thrithi⁵⁴ would aid the assimilation of the Christian Trinity.

However, in the Anglo-Saxon world-view, the Son tends to be merged with the Father and appears often as the Creator. "When Christ, the God of heavenly hosts, the Father almighty, the radiant Creator, shall sit on his throne," states the poem Christ, ". . . then on the right hand of Christ Himself the pure people shall be gathered . . . and there the evil-doers shall be assigned to the left hand in the Creator's presence." Or again, in Christ and Satan, "Lo!," Eve says, "Thou, Lord wert born into the world by my daughter to aid men. Now is it manifest that Thou are God Himself, the eternal Author of all creatures." And in the Andreas, reference is made to "the immortal Son of God ye call man, Him who with hands wrought land and sea, heaven and earth, and the raging waves." But examples are numerous;⁵⁵ theological confu-

⁵¹ Branston, op. cit., pp. 157-162; the use of *baldor*, "prince," in Judith relates this god to ruler-cult: Brincker, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

⁵² Branston, op. cit., p. 137. Cf. Chadwick, *Origin . . .*, pp. 243-267, on relation of Frey, Freyja, Gefion, and the possible continuation of the cult in England.

⁵³ Birger Pering, *Heimdall* (Lund, 1941), p. 173.

⁵⁴ Philipsson, op. cit., pp. 14-15, 19, 36, 42-52, 67-68, 73, 76.

⁵⁵ Christ, 1216-1227, Christ and Satan 439-440, Andreas 746-750. In the convenient ed. by R. K. Gordon, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (Everyman's Library; London,

sion reigns even more completely when the Three Persons are merged, as in the Christ: "The third leap, the bound of the heavenly King, was when He, the Father, the Comforter, was raised on the cross."⁵⁶ This is not Roman or Mediterranean in origin, but Germanic. To a people accustomed to conceiving of god or the gods as immanent in nature, this refusal to distinguish a transcendent Father from an immanent Son is perhaps not surprising. Its influence continues, as in a letter from Boniface to King Ethelbald of Mercia⁵⁷ and the dooms of Alfred the Great;⁵⁸ indeed, I should have suspected Anglo-Saxon determination in this matter in the Norman Anonymous, had not the President of the American Society of Church History removed him firmly from York to the archiepiscopal palace of Rouen;⁵⁹ the Scandinavian home of the Normans, however, was also full of the creating Christ.

Parallels of Heaven and Valhöll, and of Hell and the Germanic regions of Niflhel, abound in poems such as the Anglo-Saxon Judith;⁶⁰ *wyrd*, fate, becomes Christianized among the Anglo-Saxons;⁶¹ heavenly Grace appears in Beowulf as Christianized *mana*;⁶² the monsters of paganism become absorbed into the new faith also, as Grendel turns into the seed of Cain;⁶³ the possibility of a Flood story in the North independent of the Christian importation of Noah's Flood appears,⁶⁴ as does the possible use of the word *husel* (related to the Gothic *hunsl*, a sacrifice) before the Conversion for a sacrificial victim and after Anglo-Saxon Chris-

1926), pp. 171, 146, 214, respectively; other examples on pp. 144 (Christ and Satan, 201-204), 160 (Christ, 659-660), 206, 213, 215 (all from Andreas, 324-328, 700-703, 786-787). In the Gnostic Verses of the Cottonian MS., we find "God alone knows it, our Father the Savior": A. S. Cook and C. B. Tinker, *Select Translations From Old English Poetry* (revised ed.; Boston, 1926), p. 68; cf. pp. 80, 82-83, 87, 99, 123. A. S. Cook, "King Oswy and Caedmon's Hymn," *Speculum*, II (1927), p. 71, n. 2, on reference in 7th-8th century Voyage of Bran to Christ as Creator.

⁵⁶ Gordon, ed., op. cit., p. 161; Christ, 726-728.

⁵⁷ E. Emerton, tr., *The Letters of St. Boniface* (New York, 1940), p. 126.

⁵⁸ F. Liebermann, ed., *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (Halle, 1903), I, pp. 26 f.

⁵⁹ George H. Williams, *The Norman Anonymous of 1100 A.D.* (Harvard Theological Studies, XVIII; Cambridge, Mass., 1951), p. 130.

⁶⁰ Brincker, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

⁶¹ Mittner, op. cit., esp. pp. 85-95, 99; cf. Brincker, op. cit., p. 8.

⁶² Francis P. Magoun, Jr., "On Some Survivals of Pagan Belief in Anglo-Saxon England," *Harvard Theological Review*, XL (1947), pp. 33-46.

⁶³ Beowulf, 102-108.

⁶⁴ Branston, op. cit., pp. 32, 35-37.

tianization for the sacrifice of the Mass;⁶⁵ but perhaps the point is now clear. A violent conversion to the new religion was unnecessary when the old provided so many parallelisms that the tribal culture could absorb the conquering God without disrupting many of its basic preconceptions; only in time were these to give way before an ecclesiastical conquest.

Not only in concepts of theology but in those of rulership as well was a syncretism between pagan culture and Christian cult possible, and it is to this that I turn in conclusion. At the beginning it may be well to emphasize an important point; in northern paganism, not only was Woden or Odin the god of the ruler,⁶⁶ but the ruler was the leader of the tribal cult.⁶⁷ The king's god was the people's god, and the king as *heilerfüllt* stood between his tribe and the tribal gods, sacrificing for victory and plenty, "making" the year. Tied into temporal and cosmic history by divine descent, he represented and indeed *was* the "luck" of his people. It is in this Germanic tradition that the Anglo-Saxon ruler is to be seen; "just within the shadow at which the records of English history fail," as Jolliffe says, "stands the sacrificial king."⁶⁸

Consequently the conversion of the *folc* stemmed from the conversion of the king to the more powerful deity, since it was the king's relationship with the gods which "saved" his people as much as did the gods themselves; this royal function, when translated into Christian eschatology, was to be part of medieval rulership throughout the Middle Ages. It is this factor also that dominates the character of the Germanic conversion; inasmuch as English kings were converted without violent incident, by so much is tribal conversion without great external drama; when politico-cultural opposition is greater, as often occurred in Scandinavia, as under Olaf Tryggvason and Olaf the Holy, by so much is religious op-

⁶⁵ Halvorson, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

⁶⁶ Cf., e.g., Axel Olrik, *Nordisches Geistesleben in Heidnischer und Frühchristlicher Zeit* (Heidelberg, 1908), pp. 41, 96; Pering, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-119.

⁶⁷ Hans Naumann, "Die Magische Seite des Altgermanischen Königtums und Ihr Fortwirken in Christlicher Zeit," *Wirtschaft und Kultur. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Alfons Dopsch* (Baden bei Wien, 1938), pp. 1-12, esp. pp. 2-3. For the role of kings in the migration period and the pre-invasion development of Anglo-Saxon kingship, cf. H. M. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-148, 284, 289-292, 295-303.

⁶⁸ Jolliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

position greater.⁶⁹ Thus, the new Christian God — “the Almighty, the Lord of great kings,” as the Anglo-Saxon Christ calls him⁷⁰ — was seen in these terms of the god of the king, and the latter continued to “make the year.” “In the king’s righteousness,” wrote Alcuin to King Aethelred in A.D. 793, “is the common weal, victory in war, mildness of the seasons, abundance of crops, freedom from pestilence. It is for the king to atone with God for his whole people.”⁷¹ In these Christian translations the earlier pagan “luck” of the Anglo-Saxon king is heard in not too transposed a key. The fate of the *folc* is related to the fate of its prince; “let us all in common urge the aforementioned king to reform himself with his people,” wrote Boniface to the priest Herefrith concerning Aethelbald of Mercia, “that the whole nation, with its prince, may not perish here and in the future life, but that, by amending and reforming his own life, he may by his example guide his own people back to the way of salvation.”⁷² If the leaders do not serve God, Aelfric preaches in one of his homilies, “God will manifest to them their contempt of him either by famine or by pestilence.”⁷³ Further, “peace and joy among the people, fruitful years, and victory over their foes” were given “by the aid of God” to King Ecgrith and Queen Aethelthryth, rulers of Deira and Bernicia, as long as they were obedient to Bishop Wilfrid, but when the king was no longer at one with the bishop, his “luck” left him.⁷⁴ Here, of course, unlike the old religion in which there was no powerful priesthood to be equated with the Divine Will and the *principes* themselves performed priestly functions,⁷⁵ the possibility of division between two functions of the pagan Anglo-Saxon royal *persona mixta* appears, which in time will transform the Folklore Kingship of the

⁶⁹ Helmut de Boor, “Germanische und Christliche Religiosität,” *Mitteilungen der Schlesischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde*, XXXIII (1933), pp. 26–51; F. W. Buckler, “Barbarian and Greek — and Church History,” *Church History*, XI (1942), p. 22.

⁷⁰ Christ, 941–942; Gordon, ed., op. cit., p. 166. God is often described as a king; cf. p. 316: “Then the Ruler of heaven radiant as the sun shall sit on the high throne glorified with his crown” (from Doomsday).

⁷¹ Quoted in Jolliffe, op. cit., p. 43.

⁷² Whitelock, op. cit., p. 757.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 853; cf. pp. 783 (letter of Alcuin to Offa of Mercia), 784 (letter of Alcuin to Eardwulf of Northumbria).

⁷⁴ Eddius Stephanus, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, c. 19 in *ibid.*, p. 694.

⁷⁵ Naumann, op. cit., pp. 7–9.

post-Conversion period into the Liturgical Kingship of a later period. But that is another story. Suffice it here to add that apostasy from the Christian faith was regarded as bringing about the loss of kingdom and on occasion the deletion from the line of Woden-sprung monarchs who had made the proper sacrifices, in this case to the God who had conquered Woden. Thus, when Cenwealh succeeded his father, Cynegils of the West Saxons, Bede reports that he "refused to accept the faith and sacraments of the heavenly kingdom and not long after lost even the power over his earthly kingdom." When he was converted in East Anglia, however, he was restored to his realm.⁷⁶ And both Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle assign an extra year to King Oswald of Northumbria "on account of the heathen practices which had been performed by those who had reigned the one year between him and Edwin," i.e., Osric of the Deirans and Eanfrid of the Bernicians.⁷⁷ However, when Eadbald of Kent apostacized after the death of his father Aethelberht, he was not removed from the king-lists, even though his subjects followed him,⁷⁸ nor was Sighere of the East Saxons when he returned "with his part of the people" to his ancestral gods during the great plague of A.D. 664-665.⁷⁹ In both cases, however, they returned to the faith; this cannot be said, though, of Redwald of East Anglia, whose temple to the old gods, whom he worshipped along with Christ, was still remembered in Bede's day,⁸⁰ and who was still listed as a *bret-walda*. Thus, while the tribal culture was still strong enough after the Conversion to bring royal apostacy, both the old and the new religions related the fate of the kingdom to the cult of the king.

It is, consequently, not surprising that the old concept of the king as bringer of victory also continues. The Christian God, "king of victories," gave triumph to the earthly rulers who served

⁷⁶ Bede, Hist. Eccl., III, 7. Later also, when his kingdom lacked a bishop, "he understood that a province forsaken by its prelate was rightfully forsaken also by divine help."

⁷⁷ Anglo-Saxon Chronicle *sub anno* 634 (MS. E); Bede, Hist. Eccl., III, 1, which adds that the British King Cadwallon slew them both without delay *iusta ultione*. Peter Hunter Blair, "The Moore Memoranda on Northumbrian History," The Early Cultures . . . , pp. 248-249, discusses this and suggests Anglo-Saxon familiarity with the Roman custom of *damnatio memoriae*.

⁷⁸ Bede, Hist. Eccl., II, 5; A.-S. Chronicle *sub anno* 616.

⁷⁹ Bede, Hist. Eccl., III, 30.

⁸⁰ Ibid., II, 15.

him, as Edwin, for example, "in omen of his receiving the faith and the heavenly kingdom, received increased power also in his earthly dominion."⁸¹ Aelfric cites Alfred, Athelstan, and Edgar as three kings victorious through the help of God,⁸² and many battles are won by Christian kings "Christ aiding."⁸³ On the other hand, in a British source, Nennius reports that the pagan Penda of Mercia "was victorious (at Maserfelth) by diabolical agency."⁸⁴ So much is the royal person associated with victory in battle and royal devotion to God or the gods a part of maintaining the kingdom's "luck" that Sigbert, King of the East Angles, who had retired to a monastery, was forced to come forth to lead the *fyrð* into battle against Penda; however, "ipse professionis suae non immemor," he—like the priests of Anglo-Saxon paganism—refused to carry a weapon but, with only a little rod in his hand, went into battle and was slain.⁸⁵

The frequent examples of sainthood bestowed upon kings who die violent deaths may well be regarded as a Christian substitute for the ritual king-slaying of paganism. Not only were northern kings sacrificed to get good crops, as the Ynglingar Domaldi and Olaf Tretelgia of Sweden,⁸⁶ but kings were worshipped after their death.⁸⁷ So in England kings such as Edwin and Egfrid of Northumbria and Edmund of East Anglia, who fell in battle against the heathen, Oswini of Deira, who was murdered by King Oswiu, Aethelberht of East Anglia, beheaded by Offa of Mercia, and others who died unjust and violent deaths become popular saints.⁸⁸

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, II, 9.

⁸² From Judges; Whitelock, *op. cit.*, p. 854.

⁸³ E.g., A.-S. Chronicle *sub anno* 937 at Brunanburh; at Ashdown in 871 A.D. Aethelred remained praying at Mass—occupying himself with *blot*—and refusing to leave for the battle until worship was concluded, and "the faith of the Christian king availed him much with God": Florence of Worcester, *Chronicon ex Chronicis* (Rolls Series), I, p. 83.

⁸⁴ Wade-Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁸⁵ Bede, *Hist. Eccl.*, III, 18.

⁸⁶ Ynglingasaga, c. 18 and 47; H. M. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 236, 301-302; Andrew Rugg-Gunn, *Osiris and Odin. The Origin of Kingship* (London, 1940), pp. 116-117; Vigfusson and Powell, eds., *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (Oxford, 1883), I, pp. 409-410.

⁸⁷ Vigfusson and Powell, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 414-415; H. M. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

⁸⁸ A.-S. Chronicle *sub anno* 633; Bede, *Hist. Eccl.*, IV, 26; A.-S. Chronicle *sub annis* 870, 650/651, and 792 (794), respectively. H. A. Wilson, ed., *The Calendar of St. Willibrord from MS. Paris. Lat. 10837* (Henry Bradshaw Society, LV; London, 1918), dating from the first quarter of the eighth century, commemorates Edwin,

On the other hand, these early English king-saints were not represented in the early dedications of churches, which were predominantly Roman in character, except for a church of St. Cuthbert and St. Oswald near the spot where King Elfwald of Northumbria was murdered.⁸⁹ I suggest that the Church regarded it as dangerous to strengthen royal cults by official dedications of churches, in spite of its apparent blessing of these saints and the popular cult, since their localization might lead analogously to the local "high places" and sanctuaries of heathenism. In spite of the general adoption of Pope Gregory's advice, the ecclesiastical organization, wary of royal saints, preferred Roman dedications. The continuation of earlier attitudes toward ritual king-slaying is further evidenced, however, in the commemoration in an early eighth century Anglo-Saxon calendar of the very Osric of Deira who was excised from the king-lists of Northumbria for returning to the old gods;⁹⁰ his violent slaying by Cadwallon placed him, heathen though he was, among the commemorations of Christianized royal sacrificial victims, the saints. Here indeed we see the enshrinement in the new religion of kings "sacrificed" by violence, as we see the royal nature of mediatorship with God in the fact that most Anglo-Saxon saints belong to royal families.⁹¹

As pagan priest-kings staved off tribal calamity by offering *blot* — even themselves — to the gods, so Anglo-Saxon kings of the new dispensation ordered religious duties to be fulfilled by the *folc* for the same reason; King Edgar was the first to do so in his fourth code (A.D. 962–963), which was issued as a result of a pestilence which the king related to sin and the non-payment of tithes.⁹²

Egfrid, and Oswini, besides Oswald; cf. introd., p. xxii. Another early eighth century calendar, in P. Romuald Bauerreiss, "Ein angelsächsisches Kalenderfragment des bayrischen Hauptstaatsarchivs in München," *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens und Seiner Zweige*, LI (1933), p. 179, commemorates Egfrid and King Osric of Deira, the latter remarkable in view of his excision from the king-lists as an apostate, slain by Cadwallon. Whitelock, op. cit., p. 31, believes the early cult of St. Edmund of East Anglia "is understandable only on the assumption that something other than his death in battle took place;" in the light of the evidence concerning Egfrid, Osric, *et al.* and the entire concept of the "sacrificed" king, I see no difficulty in this cult.

⁸⁹ Levison, op. cit., p. 36.

⁹⁰ See above, n. 88.

⁹¹ F. Liebermann, *Die Heiligen Englands* (Hanover, 1889), passim.

⁹² A. J. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I* (Cambridge, 1925), p. 29.

Church dues were a subject of royal *dooms* previously, although never as an equivalent for *blot* to end the anger of the Deity. The dating of these ecclesiastical requirements is interesting. When the fourth *doom* of Ine of Wessex states that "Church dues shall be rendered at Martinmas,"⁹³ it should be noted that St. Martin's Day was (and is) November 11th, the great feast day closest to the old Winter's Day festival of November 7th, on which the king sacrificed for a good year, and that November in pagan England was *blotmonath*, the month of sacrifice.⁹⁴ The popularity of the feast of St. John the Baptist (June 24th) is undoubtedly a continuation of the Midsummer observance of paganism.⁹⁵ Reflecting the mixed character of this dating, tithes in the second code of King Edgar are due at Pentecost, the equinox, and Martinmas.⁹⁶

Nor do the festivals of the two religions alone relate the king to the transition from paganism to Christianity. The sacredness of the king continues in a persistent tradition of royal "divine" names, in the *character mixtus* of the English ruler, and in sanctuary connected with the king's person. Of the first, the prefix "Os-," probably signifying "divine," occurs in the names of twelve Northumbrian kings. Margaret Murray finds comfort for her theory of the Divine King in England in the fact that all but two of these died violent deaths and so are, to her, royal sacrificial victims.⁹⁷ We need not go this far, since in seventh and eighth century Northumbria, it was difficult *not* to become a royal sacrificial vic-

⁹³ Attenborough, *op. cit.*, p. 37; in the Welsh laws of Hywel Dda, "every freeman between the feast of All Saints and the feast of St. Martin" — i.e., between November 1st and November 11th — "is to pay the lord what he is bound to pay": Melville Richards, *The Laws of Hywel Dda* (Liverpool, 1954), pp. 84, 136.

⁹⁴ On the three annual great festivals of Scandinavia, cf. H. M. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 227–228, 248, and on November as sacrificial month in England, p. 228; Jolliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 42: "The three high feasts of English heathendom were Winter's Day (November 7), Midwinter's Day (December 25), and Summer's Day (May 7). . . . These, in the pagan North, were the great ceremonial feasts when the king sacrificed for the people, on Winter's Day for a good year, at Midwinter for good crops, and on Summer's Day for victory in battle." Cf. Vigfusson and Powell, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 404–405, 414. Cf. Storms, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 90, on the blessing of herbs in Anglo-Saxon England at three Masses on Midwinter's Day.

⁹⁵ Storms, *op. cit.*, p. 9; one only wishes one could know whether the former custom of visiting Silbury Hill in Wiltshire, the largest artificial mound in Europe, on Palm Sunday and feasting there extended back into Saxon times, if in other forms: Grinsell, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

⁹⁶ Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁹⁷ Margaret Murray, *The Divine King in England* (London, 1954), pp. 45–46, 218.

tim; nonetheless, the names are not without significance for the penetration of the *heilerfüllt* king of paganism into Christian times. The "Os-" prefix has also been suggested as a reminiscence of the Aesir, spirits of the North and a word applied in Icelandic to all the gods but who appear only once in Anglo-Saxon, in a charm against rheumatism, in which they are combined with elves and hags.⁹⁸ But harking back to an age when elves were larger, one may well conjecture that the syllable "Os-" rang bells in an Anglo-Saxon head that it does not in ours.

Secondly, a culture imbued with priest-kings would receive its new cult in those terms, so that the "mixed character" of the ruler would continue. It is in that light that we may see the Anglo-Saxon king speaking as a homilist, as he does in the laws, attending assemblies primarily lay, primarily clerical, and intermediate, and signing a charter at the head of the bishops and at the head of the princes.⁹⁹ The problem of the *Eigenkirche*, with the king as lay lord of monasteries, lay abbot, and perhaps even bishop (if Henry of Huntingdon is correct in describing the ninth century King Aethelwulf as Bishop of Winchester),¹⁰⁰ is too complicated to enter into here, but it may be regarded, I believe, as influenced by pagan background, as Stenton suggests in discussing the ownership of heathen shrines.¹⁰¹

Thirdly, the question of asylum is intimately linked with the transition from the old to the new religion in the light of tribal culture; the "peace" of certain places and the right of asylum, so common in Anglo-Saxon law, stem here not from constitutional but from sacral realms.¹⁰² We know from Bede's story of Coifi

⁹⁸ Storms, op. cit., pp. 50, 142-143, 147; the northern smith also makes his appearance in this charm: pp. 140-141, 146-147 (in which he is related to Weland the Smith). K. Helm, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (Heidelberg, 1913), p. 217.

⁹⁹ F. Liebermann, *The National Assembly in the Anglo-Saxon Period* (Halle, 1913), p. 17; the charter is Birch 201B.

¹⁰⁰ T. Arnold, ed., *History of the English*, by Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon (Rolls Series, LXXIV), p. 141; Corvuc was king and bishop of Ireland: J. W. Ab Ithel, ed., *Brut Y Tywysogion* (Rolls Series, XVII), p. 19.

¹⁰¹ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (2nd ed.; Oxford, 1947), pp. 101-102, 538-539; H. Boehmer, "Das Eigenkirchentum in England," *Texte und Forschungen zur Englischen Kulturgeschichte* (Halle, 1921), esp. pp. 338-339; Whitelock, op. cit., pp. 77, 83, 543, 719, 741-743, 764-765, 839, 852, and on Eadberht Praen, a priest who was made king in Kent, pp. 27, 794; cf. p. 246, on King Osred tonsured at York and deposed.

¹⁰² Ortwin Henssler, *Formen des Asylrechts und ihre Verbreitung bei den Germanen* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1954), pp. 54-55.

defiling the pagan temple that priests of the Angli were forbidden to carry arms and that weapons were banned from their temples, as they were in Scandinavia.¹⁰³ This priestly peace is continued in Christian times in the same area of the North in the Law of the Northumbrian Priests: "If a priest comes with weapons into the church, he is to compensate for it."¹⁰⁴ Icelandic saga informs us that an outlaw was not permitted by the god Frey even in the vicinity of his temple;¹⁰⁵ this and the early northern notion that the area surrounding the king was *mikill grithastathr* ("a place of great peace")¹⁰⁶ are undoubtedly based on the premise that one who enters a sacred area becomes himself *heilerfüllt*.¹⁰⁷ This continues in Anglo-Saxon law, where we read in IV Aethelstan 6 that "if (a thief) seeks the king, or the archbishop, or a holy church of God, he shall have respite for nine days,"¹⁰⁸ a royal asylum granted also in the eleventh century laws *Be Grithe and be munde*.¹⁰⁹ In the latter, however, this right, which is granted also to an archbishop or a prince, can be extended beyond the nine days — or rather nine nights here — by the king. In yet another law, the king's peace is said to extend from his *burh*-gate "III mila and III furlang and III aecera braede and IX fota and IX scaeftamunda and IX berecorna."¹¹⁰ Here the pagan North breaks through even more; the length of a grain of barley as one of the measures of the king's *grith* combines with the number nine, found also in the other two laws of royal asylum, which is the magic number of the north, related to fertility, magic, and royal cult.¹¹¹ And with these

¹⁰³ Bede, *Hist. Eccl.*, II, 13; cf. H. M. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-303; Henssler, *op. cit.*, p. 74; Vigfusson and Powell, *op. cit.*, I, p. 407.

¹⁰⁴ Whitelock, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

¹⁰⁵ Bertha Phillpotts, "Germanic Heathenism," *Cambridge Mediaeval History* (New York, 1913), II, p. 493.

¹⁰⁶ H. M. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-303.

¹⁰⁷ Henssler, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-73.

¹⁰⁸ Attenborough, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁹ Liebermann, *Die Gesetze* . . . , I, p. 470.

¹¹⁰ From Pax, dating c. 910-c. 1060 A.D., in Liebermann, *Die Gesetze* . . . , I, p. 390 (with Latin text of *Quadripartitus*, p. 391). For *scaeftamunda*, the origin of which is unclear but which was apparently a measure of about six inches, cf. J. Bosworth and T. Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford, 1898), p. 821.

¹¹¹ This complicated problem, which I plan on treating elsewhere, is also related to the "Nine Herbs Charm," above, but more largely to the whole problem of the "king's number." For the ecclesiastical "mile" of asylum at Ripon and Beverley, connected with King Aethelstan, cf. Whitelock, *op. cit.*, p. 42. Edward the Confessor's shrine granted asylum to a thief even before the king was canonized, but

overtones of sacred number, fertility cults, barley and sacrifices for good crops, sanctuary and the king's person, we must draw this to a not very Christian close.

If I plead that the break between pagan and Christian England has been overemphasized, this thesis has, of course, been put forward in extreme form by Margaret Murray in *The Divine King in England*; I do not myself detect covens of witches everywhere nor regard Charles I as a royal sacrificial victim of the old religion. One need not go so far, however, to see more heathenism lurking behind the manuscripts and artifacts than is visible to the twentieth century eye. To become an Anglo-Saxon, pagan or Christian, is impossible, but we divorce too much, I think, Anglo-Saxon Christianity from the culture, shaped by paganism, which formed and even warped it. Our view of both politics and religion is consequently influenced. I do not think, for example, that one can understand King Oswald, "the most holy and very victorious king of Northumberland," as Bede calls him, without considering the relation of the Cross which he erected at Rowley Water and northern pillar cult, the hand and knee as sacral objects, Germanic tree cult and its connections with Heimdall and Christ, pillars of light above Anglo-Saxon royal saints, royal protection against pestilence, division of the king's body after the battle of Maserfelth with dismemberment of kings to protect their realm, the hanging of sacrifices to Woden, King Oswald as a Bavarian and Tyrolean lord of the weather, and the raven of Woden and Oswald as a sacral bird. If only some of these make sense, a dimension is given to the wars of Northumbria and Mercia. And if, to move from example to thesis, culture and cult are related, a dimension is added in the past-enmeshed Conversion story in the transition from paganism to Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England.

then the Confessor was *heilerfüllt* almost at birth, since he was presented on the altar at Ely by his parents while still in his cradle; cf. F. E. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (Manchester, 1952), pp. 13, n. 2, 222. Indeed, the holiness of altar and throne is apparently reflected in the word "gifestol," which has the meaning of both places; cf. Arthur E. Dubois, "Gifestol," *Modern Language Notes*, LXIX (1954), pp. 546-549.